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Pat Fleming

Iowa State University

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Revolution of Lafayette's Favorite Dessert 1784-1961

by Pat Fleming, Diet. 2

When George Washington's mother served Lafayette mint julep with "spiced gingerbread" on his return to America in 1784, a flavor filled the kitchen which was to last for centuries. Mrs. Washington included West India molasses, a wine glass of brandy, and the juice and rind of an orange in addition to the usual gingerbread ingredients.

Through the years, many interesting variations of the spicy cake have been developed, but the old-fashioned "hard" gingerbread in the traditional shape of gingerbread men must rank first on any list of favorites.

Gingerbread Men

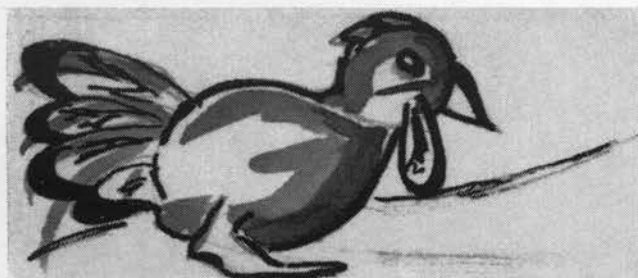
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup shortening	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon soda
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar	1 teaspoon baking powder
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsulphured molasses	1 teaspoon ginger
1 egg	$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons cloves
$2\frac{1}{2}$ cups sifted all-purpose flour	$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons cinnamon
	$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon nutmeg

Cream together shortening, sugar, and unsulphured molasses. Add egg; mix well. Sift together flour, soda, baking powder, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Add to molasses mixture; mix well. Chill in refrigerator $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Roll out on lightly floured board or pastry cloth. Cut with a 6-inch gingerbread-man cookie cutter. Bake in moderate oven (350° F.) 10 to 12 minutes. YIELD: $1\frac{1}{2}$ dozen.

From a basic "soft" gingerbread batter you can create centers of attraction for any occasion. Divide the batter of any cake-like gingerbread recipe into a 9-inch round pan and a 6-inch round pan. Make a recipe of seven-minute frosting. Then use these ideas — and your own — to fit the season.

Frosty the Gingerbread Man

Place the 9-inch and 7-inch layers adjacent to one another. Frost. Decorate with gumdrops, licorice, cinnamon, candies, raisins, and peppermint sticks.



Santa Claus

Cut a corner off the small gingerbread layer to make a hat. Use the larger layer for Santa's body and the smaller for his head. Place the cut side of the small layer next to the larger. Fix Santa's hat at a slant on the head. Tint part of the frosting red. Frost Santa with this red portion on his hat and body. Use white frosting for his face, fur trim on his suit, and for his arm outline. Decorate his face with peppermint sticks. Use licorice for buttons.

And if you aren't in the midst of a special season but still have a yen for gingerbread, here are some ways to modernize the basic "soft" recipe.

Ginger Cake Apple Fluff

Prepare gingerbread as directed. Serve gingerbread warm with apple fluff sauce.

Apple Fluff Sauce: Beat 1 cup whipping cream until thick. Fold in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sifted confectioner's sugar, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, and 1 cup sweetened thick applesauce. Chill thoroughly.

Cheese-Topped Gingerbread

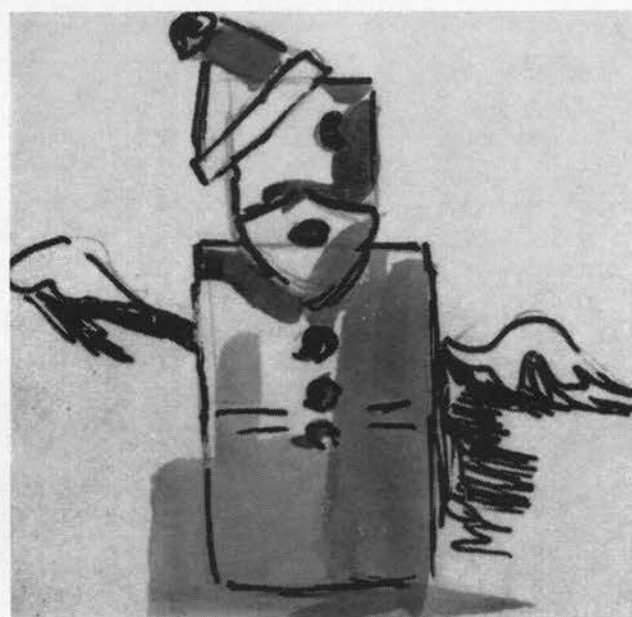
Bake gingerbread in cup cake forms. When baked, cover with cream cheese whip.

Cream Cheese Whip: Stir milk into one 3-ounce package of cream cheese until of desired consistency. Whip until light and creamy. Serve at once.



Gingerbread Turkey

Use the larger layer for the body. Cut a one-inch circle from the outer edge of the smaller layer. Connect a part of this piece as a neck, and attach the inner circle for the head. Frost with white or tinted frosting. Add construction-paper details, or use candy to complete your Thanksgiving desert.



Crunchy-top Gingerbread

Bake gingerbread as directed. Sprinkle with crunchy topping. Bake 10 minutes more.

Crunchy Topping: Combine $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar, 2 tablespoons flour, 2 tbsp. butter or margarine, dash salt, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup broken California walnuts. Mix thoroughly.

Ginger-peach Squares

Bake gingerbread as directed. Cut warm gingerbread in squares. Top each square with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Serve with warm maple-peach sauce.

Maple-Peach Sauce: Combine and heat $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups sliced peaches, drained, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup maple-flavored syrup.